

Northampton Policing Review Commission  
Policies and Services Subcommittee Agenda  
Wednesday December 15, 2020  
7PM-8:30PM  
Remote Meeting

**Join the Remote Meeting:**

**Video conference:** <https://zoom.us/j/93504686280?pwd=RlFKSjAydXNwR0QvZU1LemtpNXJPZz09>

**Or by telephone, call:** +1 929 436 2866 US **Meeting ID:** 935 0468 6280 **Passcode:** 118010

1. Call to Order by meeting chair, Nick Fleisher
  - a. Announcement of Zoom Recording
  - b. Roll Call
  - c. Approval of [12/2 Meeting Minutes](#)
2. Review of 7 identified police services by assigned Commission Members. Reports will be summarized, 5- 10 minutes so that all areas can be covered.
  - School Resource Officers - Nnamdi
  - Domestic Violence - Cynthia
  - Mental Health - Nick
  - Interactions with Houseless Individuals – Nick (via Alternatives)
  - Rape and Assault Response - Elizabeth
  - Traffic Enforcement - David
  - Drone Surveillance - Elizabeth
3. Consideration of direct meeting with the Northampton Police Chief
4. Planning for Interim report
5. New Business
6. Proposed Agenda for next meeting
7. Adjourn

## **1.MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Nick Fleisher at 7:08 PM.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING**

Commissioner Nick Fleisher made an announcement that this meeting was being recorded for the public record and would be available on Northampton Open Media, as well as, the City of Northampton website.

## **Roll Call**

Nick Fleisher (Chair) Present

David Hoose Present

Elizabeth Barajas-Roman Present

Dr. Nnamdi Pole Present

Dr. Cynthia Suopis Present

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes 12/2**

Commissioner Nick Fleisher moved to approve the meeting minutes from Policing Policies & Services meeting 12/2/20. Commissioner Nnamdi Pole seconded the motion. The meeting minutes are approved unanimously.

## **2. Review of 7 identified police services by assigned Commission Members**

### **School Resource Officers - Nnamdi**

The commissioners discussed how to move forward reviewing portions of their report.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole summarized his report on School SROS. He said Massachusetts requires the Chief of Police, in consultation with the superintendent and subject to appropriation, to assign an SRO unless the state grants an exception. He said the application for an exception requires consultation with the chief of police and provision of data showing why an SRO is not necessary or desirable. He said SROs are supposed to be picked for their appropriateness to work around children. He said there should be a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the superintendent outlining roles and responsibilities and that the SRO should not be used to enforce general school policies.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher asked whether one of the goals is to have an armed person on site at the schools in case there was a dire situation.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said one of the reasons is the prevalence of these mass shootings and people feeling there should be someone there to respond.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher asked whether the School Resource officer (SRO) serves all of the elementary, middle and high schools.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole confirmed that one officer is usually assigned to all of the schools, but noted that no one is assigned as of now. He said the idea is to have a friendly presence with youth and to be available for a crisis. He said many parents came forward saying having an armed uniformed officer does not make youth of color feel safer.

Commissioner David Hoose said the SRO from when his kids were in high school, was asked to leave because of inappropriate behavior.

Commissioner Nick Hoose summarized his report on traffic law enforcement. He said the NPD spends a lot of man hours on traffic enforcement and minor accident investigation. He also noted there are many fatalities that happen during traffic stops. He said the data shows Black and brown people are pulled over at rates higher in Northampton and Hampshire county. He said he looked at the current policies and the problem is the size of the footprint in the community. In terms of alternatives, he said you can limit what police officers do, as well as considering an electronic option. He said twenty-four states do speed enforcement electronically which means less encounters between police and citizens. He said the third option is to get police out of this business. He said he thinks it's a promising area to reduce the footprint of police in Northampton.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole wondered whether in cases of suspected drunk driving there should be a police in that role.

Commissioner David Hoose said if someone is weaving and driving 75 miles an hour on main street, yes he does want the police to pull them over.

Commissioner Nick Flesher wondered if there could be a focused downtown zone for a community safety department as a pilot.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said observing drunk driving within the confines of the city is different than on the highway and that the risk could be different.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman wondered what the expected outcome is when it comes to police in traffic patrol. She noted cops have said in the past they love doing traffic patrol because it's not about traffic, it's about stopping people so they can investigate drugs. She said police have admitted they would pull people over who were driving the speed limit because it was an indicator they didn't want to get stopped. She said it's not about whether or not we want a cop to stop a drunk driver, it's about whether or not we want a patrol car sitting there with the intent to stop people and investigate crime.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher mentioned Commissioner's Lois' chat comment and offered her the space to comment.

Commissioner Lois Ahrens wondered where David Hoose got the percentages of the identities of people being stopped. She said she thought the NPD didn't keep track of the race of people they stop. She also wondered whether the police go out on the highway.

Commissioner David Hoose said Route 91 is patrolled by police. He said the data came from an excel spreadsheet that came back in the first batch of records from the NPD and that the data was broken down by how many were stopped, who got warnings, was arrested, or

charged criminally.

### **Domestic Violence - Cynthia**

Cynthia Suopis gave her report on Domestic Violence. She said the NPD had 3500 calls for service, 341 of which were named as domestic violence. She said the city has a collaborative grant with Belchertown and the Umass Center for Women and Community to have two positions called civilian advocates who are available to field questions and concerns on the topic of domestic violence. She said this work is highly publicized. She said she was unable to find any data on their calls, their process, or how they refer and when. She also noted the NPD does 18,000 hours of police training in one year, and of those trainings, 159 of them were devoted to Domestic Violence training.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said domestic violence calls are some of the most dangerous to police and that officers see it as a particularly threatening situation because they may not have clarity on who the perpetrator is, and the victim can turn on them.

Commissioner Cynthia said she can see the validity of this. She said this is a social issue that cops are drawn into.

Commissioner Nick Flesher read from Cynthia's report and suggested calling the Umass Women's Center (Center for Women and Community) which is staffed by peers in many instances. He said the DA is particularly invested in this area. He said there may be problems but the people to go to are Safe Passages and the Umass Women's center to see what is working. He said this might be an opportunity to expand on existing relationships and support the collaboration of these agencies as this is a community response situation.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said we just had 300 days of lockdown and saw a spike in domestic violence. She said awful things happen when police become involved in domestic violence situations and that the framing of DV police work is destructive to the community, especially around using language like enemy and victim. She said to respond to survivors of intimate partner violence, survivors need to be in control, as they have been stripped of control over their lives and safety. She said the last thing police are doing is putting survivors in control. She said officers asserting their power in these situations is kindling.

Commissioner David Hoose said it seems like there is a lot of support from different organizations after intervention from the police. He said, when police arrive at the scene, they do not deescalate the situation. He said if anything things get ramped up and things get worse. He said the law on DV gives police discretion to make an arrest or not and that almost always they're going to make an arrest because they're worried about their own liability. He asked what the commission can do about the police response. He asked if the police are not going to respond to this 911, who would respond.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said she's not sure what the answer is. She said based on the statistics it's interesting that there are fewer arrests than there are calls. She agreed it's important for the victim to feel in control. She wondered what that looks like.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said survivors are more likely to report to a rape crisis center than to call 911. She said it's important to talk about the 80% of survivors that are reporting to a third party as their first step and why that is, as well as why so few

survivors end up reporting it in a law enforcement area at all.

Commissioner Nick Hoose clarified and asked whether that's a good thing.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said it's important for the committee to not focus on that highly escalated area of survivors who do report to the NPD, because mainly that's not how reporting happens.

## **Rape and Assault Response - Elizabeth**

Commissioner Elizabeth summarized her report on Sexual Assault and Rape

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said the policy is vague in the NPD and that when a sexual assault report is made with the police, a detective takes the report, and then the victim is urged to go to hospital. She said interviews are normally conducted in a private interview room. She said that's disturbing language which doesn't make assurances. She said there are a lot of "may include" language on the website that offers huge amounts of discretion going from reporting to investigating that is allowed in this working policy which is concerning in of itself. She said this language doesn't indicate whether third party reporting is allowed. She said there is nothing on the website about anti-rape education or awareness. She said any mention of prevention talks about protecting yourself which puts onus on survivors. She said the Number of training hours for hate crimes was two hours, sex trafficking was 35 hours, sexual assault was 70 hrs, and there were zero training hours on sexual harassment or crime prevention which was concerning. She said there were 77 hrs reported for fair impartial policing, and 800 hours of active shooter training. She said active shooters are the least common thing that happens in Northampton and the training amounts are both disproportionate and show the level of expertise. She said this frames sexual assault as crime of property and not the individual. She said police officers do not need to be working directly with survivors. She said minorities, women and immigrants report disproportionately high incidents of reporting to third parties around rape and sexual assault, which speaks to the barriers to having police respond to these particular communities that are already feeling distrustful and oppressed by that entity.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said under the current policies, he did notice less training related on community issues and time spent on human services work. He said it may be that this work shouldn't be their jobs. He said the commission recommendation should pay attention to what to do with a 911 call when there is escalated domestic violence.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis noted the minimal amount of training. She said she recalls people saying training doesn't work. She said she doesn't want to get hung up on the idea that more police training hours need to be added and that the police culture will change. She asked the committee to consider that if you're a victim, you will call someone other than the police, and to think about what that would look like.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said she is bringing up these training hours to uncover some of the arguments held around why police are so necessary. She said lots of folks say we'll need police for these "what ifs". She said she wants to put it in perspective because it's been overstated. She said the police are somehow listed as the expert in this area, when the reality of the training hours, means they are not the experts at all. She said it doesn't add up to the argument that we need police for these extreme things that might happen. She said they don't even really have deescalation training when we hear "we need

police to deescalate a situation”.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher clarified and asked whether Elizabeth is suggesting enhance training of police to handle rape calls.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said she is sharing this in the hopes of empowering rape crisis centers that center survivors (not all of them do), in their response, and allow for third party centers to directly report to police so that survivors are guided. She said the only police link is detectives who investigate reports. She recommended keeping survivors away from police stations and for survivors to have minimal contact except for court.

Commissioner Nick Hoose said rape crisis centers are connected and aren't under the police whatsoever and try to engage Cooley hospital. He asked Commissioner Elizabeth if she was suggesting a change to that system.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said she is suggesting explicitly extracting the police from that process, as right now they are deeply embedded in the process.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher - report on mental health

Commissioner Nick Fleisher offered his report on mental health. He said the policies on responding to mental illness are more extensive than most of the areas the commission talked about. He noted crisis intervention training is 40 hours long. He said he does believe training has an impact on officers to conduct themselves much more consistently and are more aware of problems of escalating people with mental illness, more than 10 years ago. He mentioned a drug addiction recovery team- innovative pilot which is a collaboration with DA that has peers involved have peers. He said he feels a different model would benefit police.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole suggested designing policing around what they are trained to do. He said 80% of community need could be responded to by someone other than the police.

Commissioner David Hoose said this could apply to traffic too. He said, to make change in the department, there has to be better educated and trained people who field 911 calls and divert them. He said one overarching concern he has is who fields the calls.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said dispatch is using the resources that currently exist. He said he proposes dispatch be an integral part of the mission of a responder system, so they know what resources are available, and what a peer would be doing so they are informed. He said dispatch could be involved with policy development with the whole model.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said dispatch is often overlooked in terms of reform, even in terms of anti bias training which are often not required. She said the person who is at the end of the line when people call is integral.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said the budget is something the committee has to consider if this is approached as incremental.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman suggested the commission take a look at the incident report and ask for dispatch transcripts. She said you'd be shocked at the types of language police and dispatchers are using to talk about our community. Things get

escalated at dispatch level. She said she is concerned that she's the last woman of color on this committee and that the younger women on this committee have resigned. She noted hours being hard for folks with children. She said she is wondering in terms of the legitimacy of the process and said she feels concerned about having conversations about accessibility of marginalized individuals while losing essential voices on this committee. She said the committee and the commission hasn't addressed why the commission is losing those voices.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said this topic is on the agenda for full commission.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman asked whether the committee had anything to say in response.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said this is an important observation and she's glad it's on the agenda.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said he is interested in having more information about why. He said would hate to speculate, and thinks it would be better to have more information.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher asked if the committee can move on. He said he appreciates Elizabeth bringing it up.

### **3. Consideration of direct meeting with the Northampton Police Chief**

Commissioner Nick Fleisher moved to table this agenda item until the next meeting

### **4. Planning for Interim report**

The commissioners discussed next steps for compiling their reports for the preliminary report.

### **6. Proposed Agenda for next meeting**

Commissioner David Hoose suggested sending subcommittee next steps and ideas about next steps to Noa.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he would like to hear what aspects of the work the committee has done so far that feels important and in the direction the committee wants them to be moved forward and contribute to the full commission.

The commissioners discuss the date of the next meeting.

### **7. Adjourn**

**Commissioner Nick Fleisher moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45pm. The motion adjourn is passed unanimously.**